

Sūrah Ḥadīd

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Wāqī‘ah, the previous *sūrah*. Though both *sūrahs* are separated by both the time and period of revelation since this *sūrah* is Madīnan and the previous one is Makkan, however, both are deeply related to one another as far as their meanings are concerned. In the previous *sūrah*, the principle reality is explained that the Day of Judgement is bound to come, and when it comes mankind will be divided into three groups. One group will consist of the *sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, the second of the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and the third of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl*.

In this *sūrah*, Muslims are urged to become part of the *sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, and the methodology spelled out to achieve this is that those who fight and spend in the way of God before the conquest of Makkah will be counted among the *sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, and their status will be greater than those who will fight and spend in the way of God after this conquest. Though splendid is the promise of God with both, yet the difference between the two is evident as far as attaining the nearness of God is concerned. In this regard, those Muslims are urged to spend and fight in the way of God who though had embraced Islam were weak in fulfilling its demands as they were not full aware of the requirements of faith. They are warned that if by getting entangled in the love of this world they lose the determination to obtain the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, then they should remember that like the Jews their hearts too will be hardened and they will meet a similar fate.

Besides this relationship between the two *sūrahs* with regard to their meaning, there is also an apparent relationship between the two. The previous *sūrah* ended on the words فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ while this *sūrah* begins with the words سَبِّحْ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ. In other words, the last verse of the previous *sūrah* dovetails into the first verse of this *sūrah* nicely connecting the two together. Examples of such an exquisite relationship can also be seen in previous *sūrahs*, and this is a clear indication of the Qur’ān being a coherent and well-knitted book.

Analysis of the Discourse

The *sūrah* can be distinctly divided into the following nine sections.

Verses (1-6): In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a comprehensive reference is made to the attributes of Wisdom, Power, Knowledge, Authority, Origination and Administration of the Almighty in order to highlight the fact that someone possessing these attributes will be the one towards whom every one will turn on the Day of Judgement; therefore, it is befitting that only He should be praised and glorified. Everything within this Universe is glorifying Him and this act of theirs invites mankind to worship Him only and not associate others with Him in it.

Verses (7-10): A warning is sounded to the Muslims in general and those among them having a weak faith in particular that they should fulfil the requisites of the covenant of “to listen and obey” they had pledged at the hands of the Prophet (sws) with all the spirit and determination they can muster. It is the self-evident requirement of their faith to respond positively to waging war and spending in the way of God which the Prophet (sws) is today calling them to. It is this attitude which shall bring them towards light from darkness. Those who today spend and fight in the way of God shall have a higher status than those who would do so after the conquest of Makkah, though they too shall be rewarded by the Almighty.

Verses (11-15): Those who shall spend in the way of God with purity of purpose shall find that their spending has manifested itself into a radiant light which shall guide them to Paradise. Those who will not spend in the way of God because of hypocrisy shall be deprived of this light. These people will ask the believers to let them also benefit from its radiance. The believers shall reply that they have lost the opportunity to do so by their behaviour in the previous world and they shall not receive it now whatsoever. After this exchange of dialogue, a wall shall be erected between the two, on one side of which will be the blessings of God and on the other side will be His blazing torment.

Verses (16-17): The Hypocrites are warned that even after seeing such manifest signs of the supremacy of Islam, if they do not open their eyes and show hesitation and refrain from spending in the way of God, they shall become hardhearted like the Jews before them and meet a similar fate. They are reminded that the Day of Reckoning is certain to come; neither should they become indifferent to its reward nor unafraid of its punishment.

Verses (18-19): Those who spend in the way of God and fight for His cause should rest assured that the Almighty shall value their sacrifices; in fact, they shall be rewarded many times for each sacrifice they make. It is this fighting and spending in God’s way which shall entitle them to become *shuhadā’* and *ṣiddiqīn* and they shall also be rewarded the radiant light from which the Hypocrites shall remain deprived.

Verses (20-21): Sorrow is expressed over the timid and unenterprising attitude of the people who have given their hearts to the transitory pleasures

of this world and have forgotten the mercy of their Lord as well as the Paradise which is as vast as the vastness of the heavens and the earth.

Verses (22-24): A reminder is sounded that a person's opulence or poverty does not depend on his own schemes and plans but on the fate which has been divinely ordained for him. The correct attitude, therefore, is that a person, whether he is in ease or in difficulty, should surrender to the will of the Almighty. If he has been blessed with wealth, he should not hesitate to spend it in the way of God. He should be aware that just as the Almighty can bless a person with something, He can also deprive him of it whenever He wants.

Verses (25-27): A refutation is made of the claim of the people who on the basis of the concept of *rahbāniyyah* (asceticism) regard fighting and spending in the way of God as mundane activities and condemn the spirit of *jihād* of the Muslims. By referring to history of prophets and messengers, it is shown that *jihād* has remained the Sunnah of the Prophets and *rahbāniyyah* is a religious innovation of the Christians; it is the result of their transgressing the bounds of their religion. The Prophet Jesus (sws) never taught it.

Verses (28-29): Muslims are urged to selflessly answer the call of *jihād* made by the Prophet (sws) and spend magnanimously for this cause. They are told that they should pay no heed to the evil suggestions of the wicked among the People of the Book who are saying that *jihād* is a mundane undertaking. The prophets have always undertaken *jihād* to establish justice and equity and the Muslims must follow the path of the prophets. The *rahbāniyyah* invented by the Christians is something which had no place in the real teachings of the Prophet Jesus (sws). They are just showing their malice towards the Muslims – but against their wishes, the Almighty shall reward the Muslims according to the fate He has destined for them.

Section I: (Verses 1-6)

Text and Translation

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١) لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
يُخَيِّئُ وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢) هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣) هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ

أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤) لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ
الْأُمُورُ (٥) يُوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٦)

In the came of God, the Most gracious, the Ever Merciful

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only. And He is the Mighty, the Wise one. It is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. He alone ordains life and death, and has power over all things. He is the First and also the Last, the Apparent and also the Hidden and He has knowledge of all things. (1-3)

It was He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then mounted the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that descends from the heavens and all that ascends in it. And He is with you wherever you are, and watches all that you do. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God shall all things return. (4-5)

He makes the night to pass into the day, and the day to pass into the night. And He has knowledge of the secrets of hearts. (6)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)

I have explained the word *تَسْبِيحٌ* (*tasbīḥ*) a number of times in this *tafsīr*. It purges the being for whom it is spoken from all evil attributes and also connotes worship. This can be through both words and deeds. Exalting God through the tongue is also *تَسْبِيحٌ* and offering the prayer and standing, kneeling and prostrating before Him is also *تَسْبِيحٌ*. It has various forms. Every object of this universe does *tasbīḥ* of God in some way or the other. So much so, the Qur'ān has also mentioned the fact that people who do not willing do it, are forced to do it in the sphere where they cannot exercise their free will. Consequently, on this basis, people are asked not to create disharmony between their spheres of freedom and spheres of compulsion. This point has been explained at an appropriate place earlier.

Wherever the Qur'ān has referred to the *tasbīḥ* of all objects of the universe, it is generally done so for three purposes:

Firstly, to remind people of the fact that when every small and big thing of this universe acknowledges the right of their Lord over them and does His *tasbīḥ*, then this right is even more established in the case of man that he does *tasbīḥ* of his Lord. The reason for this is that God made

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only. And He is the Mighty, the Wise one.

him the best of all his creatures and blessed him with His *khilāfah*.

Secondly, to encourage the believers to discharge this right so that they do not despair and lose hope when they see that the majority of this world consists of ingrates. If there are few among mankind who recognize the right of God over them, then this is something which should not cause despair and depression. All the rest of the universe is zealously doing *tasbīḥ* and glorification of God. He who treads this path is not alone; in fact, caravans and caravans of people tread this path.

Thirdly, to express indifference to who those desist from God's worship in spite of being reminded, and to tell them that if they do not do *tasbīḥ* of God, then God does not need it. Every object is doing *tasbīḥ*; if some unfortunate among men are desisting from it, they are not harming God in any way; they are harming their own selves.

At some instances, all these three purposes are implied, and some others one or two of them. They can easily be distinguished. If the strand of sequence of the discourse is fully kept in consideration, this distinction can easily be made by the one who deliberates on it.

The implication of the words *وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ* is that since God is *الْعَزِيزُ* and is *الْحَكِيمُ*, for this reason, it is befitting that only He be worshipped and His *tasbīḥ* be done. The attribute *الْعَزِيزُ* means that He is dominant over everyone and has all the authority and that there is no one beyond His control; no one can prevail over Him or dominate Him. At the same time, God is also *الْحَكِيمُ*. Hence each and every action of His is based on wisdom and justice. It is not that He can exercise power in any way He wants to whether this has any wisdom and purpose behind it or not. This universe is a very small product of His power. It bears witness from its very existence that its creator prevails over everyone and there is immense wisdom in all that He does. It is this wisdom of His which entails that He bring about a day in which those people be rewarded who led their lives within the limits set forth by Him, and those punished who exceeded these limits. If He does not do this, then this is against His honour and power, and if He does not do this in spite of being able to, then this is against His wisdom, mercy and justice. Without this, this world becomes a meaningless existence and a playground of children, and it is against the majesty of a powerful and wise being to create something so stupendous without any purpose merely for merriment.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ²

The implication of this verse is that the kingdom of the heavens and the

2. It is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. He alone ordains life and death, and has power over all things.

earth is in His hands. No one is His partner in administering it so that he may interfere in any way. He it is Who gives life and death. When this is so, then how can someone be His partner in administering this kingdom.

The implication of the words *وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ* is that there is nothing beyond His power that He may need a helper. Each and every part of His kingdom is under His jurisdiction only and governed by Him alone. He can do anything He likes through His command of *kun*.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ³

After a mention of the extent of His power, mentioned here is the extent of His knowledge. He is the First and Last: when there was nothing, He existed and when nothing will remain, He alone will exist. He initiated everything and to Him will everything return.

The Prophet (sws) has explained the words *وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ* thus: *أَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ* (You are apparent; nothing is above You. You are Hidden and nothing is below You).⁴ In verse thirteen, these words have been used to connote “inside and outside” ie. the knowledge of God embraces everything inside and outside.

The words *وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ* summarize the whole issue in the form of a principle: He is aware of everything; the hidden and the concealed are equally in His knowledge.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ⁵(٤)

Mentioned here are further details of God's all-embracing knowledge and wisdom: He created the heavens and the earth in six days, and after creating them, He did not isolate Himself in some corner after delegating their administration to others. He Himself is governing them by being stationed on His throne. The word “throne” refers to the reins of power. I have explained what is meant by “six days” that it refers to the days of

3. He is the First and also the Last, the Apparent and also the Hidden and He has knowledge of all things.

4. Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-risālah, 1993), 246, (no. 966).

5. It was He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then mounted the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that descends from the heavens and all that ascends in it. And He is with you wherever you are, and watches all that you do.

God and not to our days.

Wherever the six day creation of the heavens and the earth is mentioned, the purpose is to direct attention to the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in creating them. After this, the inference is made that what is created by God in such an elaborate and thorough manner, how will He become indifferent to their affairs and not show concern on its good and evil and why would He remain silent as a spectator on whatever mischief and excesses people may indulge in. If He does so, then this will only mean that He has made this universe as a playground in which He made elaborate arrangements but it has no purpose.

The words *يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا* explain that He is running the affairs of His dominion very alertly and minutely: He knows whatever enters the earth and whatever comes out of it; He is also aware of what descends from the heavens and what ascends towards it. He is with every person wherever he is and watched whatever they do.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ^٦

The implication is that not only is the Almighty aware of everything, He is practically the fountainhead and source of all affairs. All matters are initiated at His behest, and their report is presented before Him alone. His taskforce turns to Him for all directives, and present their performance report before Him only. Neither is anyone authorized to do anything at his own discretion nor is anyone immune from being accountable before Him.

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ^٧

The verse points out that the cycle of day and night is not going on of its own accord. No one else except God is governing it. He alone inserts and takes out the day into the night and night into the day; both enthusiastically follow each other.

The implication of the words *وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ* is that when He alone brings the light of the day and the darkness of the night and He brings forth the light of the day to disperse the all-embracing darkness and unveils everything covered by it, so how can anything remain hidden from Him? He is fully aware of the most concealed secrets and is even aware of the secrets of the hearts.

6. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God shall all things return.

7. He makes the night to pass into the day, and the day to pass into the night. And He has knowledge of the secrets of hearts.

Section II: Verses (7-15)

In the next section of verses, those Muslims are addressed who had formally embraced faith and had pledged the covenant of “to listen and to obey”; however, when the time came for waging war and spending for the cause of God, they failed to fulfil the requisites of faith. Such weak Muslims are informed that they should assess their own character in the light of God’s attributes, and fulfil the requisites of the faith they have embraced. Today, if they want to be counted among the foremost to Islam, they can do so by responding to the calls of the Prophet (sws) regarding waging war and spending for the cause of God; otherwise they should remember that their fate will be like that of the Hypocrites, and the opportunity they lose today, will never come to their disposal again.

Text and Translation

آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧) وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٨) هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَارُؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (٩) وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ أُولَئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا وَكَلَّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١٠) مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١١) يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٢) يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتِسِبْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا فَضَرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (١٣) يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ حَتَّى جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الْغُرُورُ (١٤) فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٥)

Believers! Profess faith in God and His Messenger and spend from the

wealth He has entrusted you with; thus those of you who embrace faith and spend in charity they shall be richly rewarded. And what has happened to you that you are not professing faith in God and His Messenger even though the Messenger is inviting you to profess faith in your God, and He has taken a strong covenant from you, if you are believers? (7-8)

It is He who brings down clear revelations to His servant so that he may lead you out of darkness into the light. And indeed God is compassionate to you and merciful. And why should you not spend in the cause of God when God alone will inherit the heavens and the earth? Those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a greater status than those spend and wage far afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward; And God is aware of all that you do. (9-10)

Who will give a generous loan to God so that He may increase it and he shall receive a noble recompense. Remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands: "Glad tidings are for you of gardens watered by running streams in which you shall abide forever." This is the supreme triumph. On the Day when the Hypocrites, both men and women, will call out to the believers: "Please give us the chance to benefit from your light." But they will be told: "Go back, and there seek the light!" Thus a wall will separate them and the believers in which there will be a door. Inside it, there shall be mercy, and outside it torment. They will plead to them, saying: "Were we not on your side?" "Yes," they will reply, "you were indeed so but you indulged in mischief, waited for our turn of fortunes, remained in doubts and were deceived by desires until God's will was done and the Deceiver kept you in deception about God. So, today no ransom shall be accepted from you, or from the disbelievers. The Fire shall be the abode for all of you; it is your place of return and what an evil abode it is!" (11-15)

Explanation

آمِنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ⁸ (٧)

Though the address in آمِنُوا is apparently general, it will become

8. Believers! Profess faith in God and His Messenger and spend from the wealth He has entrusted you with; thus those of you who embrace faith and spend in charity they shall be richly rewarded.

evident later from contextual indicators that it is directed to a certain category of Muslims and to the Hypocrites who though had laid claim to faith in God and His Prophet (sws), but started to evade and desist from its demands of spending and waging war for the cause of God when they arose before them. It is by addressing such claimants of faith that they are told to profess faith in God and His Prophet in the real sense of the word. In other words, the word آمَنُوا is used here in its complete form the way it is in (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا (4: ١٣٦) (O you who lay claim to faith! profess strong faith, (4:136)). Examples of a verb being used in its initial and complete meanings can be seen in the previous *sūrah*s.

The words وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَحْلِفِينَ فِيهِ mention an essential requirement and also a very clear and natural reason. The implication is that the obligation a person owes to his faith in God and the Prophet (sws) does not stand fulfilled by merely verbally expressing faith; it is essential for its fulfillment that when they are called to sacrifice their life and wealth for the cause of God, they should positively respond to it. How can those who do not even have the courage to spend their wealth be expected to sacrifice their lives, and what is the status of the claim to faith of those who do not have the courage to sacrifice neither their wealth nor their life.

The words مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَحْلِفِينَ فِيهِ imply that these people should keep in consideration the fact that they are neither the creators nor the owners of this wealth; God has, in reality, entrusted it to them so that they may use it within the limits He has set forth and be ready to give an account of each and every penny to Him. The implication is that when they are not the creators and masters of this wealth and only its trustees and when a demand comes to them from the very being who has entrusted them with this to wealth to spend it, then why are they showing stinginess in this?

هَٰذَا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَحْلِفِينَ فِيهِ: here the word أَنْفَقُوا (spend) after آمَنُوا (profess faith) is meant to attest and bear witness to faith. In other words, people who have professed faith attest to it by spending for the cause of God should rest assured that this is a very lucrative deal; God will generously repay them. They will be rewarded ten times; so why should they be apprehensive on making this investment.

Here, it is essential to remember what had been alluded to earlier: the attributes of God mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* are effectively a mirror for the people: while keeping them in consideration, people who have laid claim to faith should enhance their moral conduct. It was stated earlier on that God is the First and the Last and everything will return to Him. When this is the reality, then whatever a person has in this world is not owned by him; he is their custodian from God; so when the real owner

is God, then what is the sense in withholding His money from Him.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٨)⁹

This verse counsels in a rebuking manner such weak Muslims: when they have pledged a covenant of “to listen and obey” at the hands of the Prophet (sws), then this requires that they follow with letter and spirit whatever directive be revealed by God and whatever call be given to them by the Prophet (sws); however, in actual fact, they are evading the calls of the Prophet (sws) to spend for the cause of God; what type of a pledge and what sort of faith is this. And when this today when the Prophet (sws) is among them is the condition of their faith and pledge and he himself is asking them to fulfill the requirements of faith, what will happen later when the Prophet (sws) is no longer among them.

Two things are clearly expressed in this verse:

Firstly, it is an essential requirement of faith that a person profess faith in everything revealed by God and to which the Prophet (sws) called them. Denying any one of them is like denying all.

Secondly, deeds are only a manifestation of faith, and spending for the cause of God occupies special importance in nurturing and strengthening faith. Thus here, for this very reason, the call to spend for the cause of God has been expressed as the call to faith.

The word مِيثَاق (pledge) here refers to the pledge of “to listen and obey” which every Muslim was required to do at the hands of the Prophet (sws). My mentor Imām Farāhī’s inclination is that it refers to the pledge mentioned in the following verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٨١:٣)

And when God took a pledge about the prophets: “Now that I gave you the Book and the wisdom and then comes to you a Messenger in confirmation of what is with you, believe in him and help him.” He said: “Do you acknowledge this and accept the burden I have laid on you in these terms?” They replied: “We acknowledge it.” He said:

9. And what has happened to you that you are not professing faith in God and His Messenger even though the Messenger is inviting you to profess faith in your God, and He has taken a strong covenant from you, if you are believers?

“Then bear witness and I will bear witness with you.” (3:81)

I have deliberated on this, and have been unable to understand it. What is mentioned in the above quoted verse has a different context; it cannot be implied here. On the other hand, my view is corroborated by the following verse of Sūrah Mā'idah: **وَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا** (7:5) (remember God's favour to you, and the covenant with which He bound you when you said: “we listen and obey;” (5:7))

هُوَ الَّذِي يُزِيلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَارْؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (9)¹⁰

The verse tells these people that they should not try to run away from the call of spending for the cause of God given by the Prophet (sws). The Almighty is revealing these radiant verses to Him so that He can take you out from the darkness of their evil desires and bring them to the radiance of love for the Hereafter. They should not think that the Almighty wants them to be put through hardships and difficulties. He is forgiving and gracious. He is opening up the path that will lead them to success both in this world and in the Hereafter and not inflicting hardships on them.

The words **آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ** though refer to all the guidance which people were receiving through the Prophet (sws); however, here specifically those verses are referred to which relate to spending and waging war for the cause of God, and which in part are also mentioned with clear arguments further down in the *sūrah*.

The word **الظُّلُمَاتِ** refers to the darkness of one's lustful desires and of the love of this world the sole remedy for which is to spend in the way of God and the word **النُّورِ** refers to the radiance produced by spending in the way of God and which is mentioned ahead in verse twelve.

I have already explained the expression **رَّؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ** at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. The first of these attributes implies that God wards off evil and the second implies that God affirms good.

وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ أَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ أُولَئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا

10. It is He who brings down clear revelations to His servant so that he may lead you out of darkness into the light. And indeed God is compassionate to you and merciful.

وَكَلَّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ¹¹

This verse urges these weak Muslims to spend for the cause of God and for this purpose state two arguments as motivating factors. The first of them is the same as is alluded to earlier in verse seven: God is the owner of all what belongs to the heavens and the earth. Whatever control a person has in this world on various things is temporary as God's vicegerent and trustee. In the end, everything is to return to God. So when a human being leads this transient life while being entrusted wealth by God, then what is the meaning of showing such miserliness? The only right attitude in this matter can be that if he is stingy for his own needs he can be so, but when He who has entrusted this wealth to him demands it, he should generously spend it.

Secondly, a variation in circumstances greatly changes the quality of a deed. At that time, when disbelief and disbelievers prevailed in Makkah (it should remain in consideration that this *sūrah* was revealed before the conquest of Makkah) and the Quraysh were dreaded in Arabia, if people spend for the supremacy of Islam and take part in *jihād*, their status will be much higher before God than those who will do so after the conquest of Makkah when the Quraysh would be humbled. Fortunate are those who take the initiative to serve Islam in these difficult circumstances. In other words, if they are given this opportunity, they should not waste it; on the contrary, they should try to show determination in trying to secure a place among the near and loved ones of God.

It has already been explained in Sūrah Waqī'ah that Muslims who would be counted as the near and loved ones of God would belong more to the early period of Islam when it would become alien among the masses; they would be the ones who would be blessed with the grace of serving Islam with perseverance. Very few people from the later periods would end up in this category. These would be people who would pass through very strenuous trials and achieved some great feat for the cause of religion.

The words *وَكَلَّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ* mean that great is the promise of God for both. Even after the conquest of Makkah those who made sacrifices for the cause of Islam will have different status with regard to the extent of their services. Whoever will serve Islam with

11. And why should you not spend in the cause of God when God alone will inherit the heavens and the earth? Those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a greater status than those spend and wage far afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward; And God is aware of all that you do.

sincerity and good intention will gain reward; moreover, there will be those among them who would be categorized among the topmost. However, the period before the conquest of Makkah is different. Fortunate are the people who recognize its worth and duly benefit from it.

Here the word **الْفَتْحُ** (conquest) obviously refers to the conquest of Makkah. Some people are of the opinion that it refers to the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, but this truce cannot be regarded as the real conquest; it was only prelude to the conquest of Makkah. By the word **الْفَتْحُ** (conquest), the mind instantly jumps to the conquest of Makkah. During this struggle, it was deeply-rooted in the heart of every Muslim that the real purpose of the messengerhood of Muḥammad was to cleanse the House of God from all the filth of disbelief and polytheism and to make evident before the people its true Abrahamic majesty. Consequently, every true Muslim was desirous of this event and was awaiting it. Only the Hypocrites because of their spinelessness were hesitant. A mention of this indecisiveness of theirs is mentioned further ahead in the *sūrah* as a reason for their hypocrisy.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١١)

In very clear and effective words, this verse makes an appeal for financial help regarding *jihād*: who is it who can give a befitting loan to God so that God may increase it and richly reward them. The word loan used here can refer to general spending for the cause of God; here it is evident from the context that it refers to monetary assistance for *jihād*.

The appeal found in the word “loan” used for spending for the cause of God does not need any elaboration. It has become evident earlier that whatever a person has is a trust given to him by God. It is a great favour of the munificent God that when He asks people to spend for His cause the very wealth He had blessed them with, He calls it to be a loan for which He is liable to them to pay back just as a borrower is responsible to pay back what he has borrowed from a money-lender.

The implication of the word **فَيُضَاعِفُهُ** is that it is not that the Almighty is demanding loan because of some shortfall in His treasure. When everything has been created and given by Him, how can this question arise? He is only asking for this amount so that the money He has blessed people with is deposited in His bank and is increased manifold so that its profit takes the form of a never ending reward that can be used in an eternal life. The sarcasm this style carries for interest-capitalists is not

12. Who will give a generous loan to God so that He may increase it and he shall receive a noble recompense.

hidden for those who have a flare for the language. In other words, what is implied is that he who deposits his capital in the banks of this world should know that his capital and everything else is transient; however, the capital a person saves with God will reap eternal profits and will also remain safe and secure with Him.

People have generally translated this word as “two-fold”; this, however, is not correct. It means “to increase”. This increase can be two-fold, four-fold, ten-fold and in fact manifold. It depends on the sincerity of the giver and on his circumstances in which he gave it and most of all on the blessings of the Almighty Who has opened the way of eternal profit for His creation.

The word loan is qualified here with just one condition: “a befitting loan”. The Qur’ān has explained this term at various places and it is evident from this explanation that it refers to a loan given with generosity and magnanimity and not because of stinginess merely because of compulsion or show; it is given from one’s good wealth and not given merely to discharge a responsibility in a trivial manner and most of all it is given merely to please God and not for any worldly interest, and also one does not express one’s generosity over the borrower after giving it and also does cause bother and hurt to others.

The words وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ imply that whatever increase this wealth will have is just one thing; moreover, the Almighty will bless that person with even more reward out of His grace. An explanation of this is forthcoming.

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ^{١٣}

This is an explanation of one aspect of this noble reward. The implication is that the Almighty will on the Day of Judgement guide people who spent for His cause to Paradise in such a manner that their light will be advancing ahead of them and on their right. In its radiance, they advance towards Paradise. On the other hand, people who would have not created this light for themselves will be left in pitch darkness.

A look at the context of this verse shows that this light will be given to them in return for spending for the cause of God. I have already indicated under verse nine earlier: **هُوَ الَّذِي يَتَرَّلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ** that the words **آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ** specially refer to those verses

13. Remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands: "Glad tidings are for you of gardens watered by running streams in which you shall abide forever." This is the supreme triumph.

which were revealed to explain the importance and exaltedness of such spending. It is such spending which roots out hypocrisy and blesses a person with the radiance of wisdom which guides a him in the darkness of this world and will also guide him in the Hereafter.

The word سَعَى here does not refer to running. This word is used for something being done with zeal and enthusiasm or with vigilance; in fact, it is primarily used in this meaning. Here it is used thus as well. This light will spread in front of them and on their right. Its radiance will not spread on the left so that the companions of the left hand are not able to benefit from it. Succeeding verses mention their deprivation from this light.

These words بُشْرَاكُمْ الْيَوْمَ جَاءَتْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ of glad tidings can be a portrayal of the circumstances and can also be the words said by angels. Examples of both these usages are found in the Qur'ān.

The implication of the words ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (this is great success) is that if the Almighty has blessed someone with wealth, then the greatest benefit which a person can receive from it is that by spending it for the cause of God create that light in his heart which will guide him in the darkness of the Day of Judgement. All other benefits except this are temporary and transient, and the harm concealed in them is eternal and everlasting. What is meant that if they have the courage, they should spend it to achieve this great success.

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا فَضَرَبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (١٣)¹⁴

On that day, the Hypocrites will be wandering in darkness. By not spending for the cause of God, they never created the light in their hearts which could guide them in the Hereafter. When they will see a group of people – people with whom they lived in this world – has the light with them to guide them in this pitch darkness, they will longingly request them to be able to go near them and benefit from their light. They will be told to not make this desire of benefitting from this light and that they should turn back and try to find light there if they can. The implication is

14. On the Day when the Hypocrites, both men and women, will call out to the believers: “Please give us the chance to benefit from your light.” But they will be told: “Go back, and there seek the light!” Thus a wall will separate them and the believers in which there will be a door. Inside it, there shall be mercy, and outside it torment.

that they have left behind the place where they could have obtained this light. The time for that has finished. Nothing now remains for them save longing and being ashamed of themselves. Some people regard this statement to be, God forbid, a trick. This is not so; it is an expression of reality. The place for earning and sowing is this world. He who did not sow virtue in it, he will be deprived from everything in the Hereafter.

After this rejoinder, a wall shall be erected between them and the believers which will have just one door. On its inner side will be mercy and on its outer side will be torment. The believers will go to the inner side through the door, and the Hypocrites will be surrounded in the darkness of torment. Mention of a similar wall can also be found in Sūrah A'rāf. For details, it can be looked up.

يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ
وَعَرَّيْتُمْ الْأُمَانِيَّ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَعَرَّيْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ¹⁵ (١٤)

When the Hypocrites will see that the glimpse of light they had seen has also vanished, and all contacts with those with whom they lived in the previous world were severed, they will plead sorrowfully: “brothers you have totally ostracized us; did we not live with you in the previous world; how can you be so indifferent to your brothers.”

The reply they will get will be: “there is no doubt that you apparently lived with us, but your hearts were not with us and you remained in the temptations from which God wanted to deliver you; you claimed faith in such a vehement manner but you did not have the guts to fulfil the requisites of this faith which kept coming before you; your wealth and lives were dearer to you than God and His Prophet; you were faithful to the enemies of Islam, and you gave preference to your personal interests in favour of the truth.

The word وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ refers to the fact that the Hypocrites continuously awaited that calamities and hardships should befall the believers. In Sūrah Tawbah, the character of these Hypocrites is mentioned in the following words: (٩٨:٩) وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ (there are some desert Arabs who if ever spend for the cause of Islam regard it be a fine on themselves and wait for some misfortune to befall you, (9:98)). In Sūrah Nisā', they are portrayed thus: الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ (١٤١:٤) (whose state of affairs is such that await

15. They will plead to them, saying: “Were we not on your side?” “Yes,” they will reply, “you were indeed so but you indulged in mischief, waited for our turn of fortunes, remained in doubts and were deceived by desires until God’s will was done and the Deceiver kept you in deception about God.

defeat for you; however, if contrary to their wishes, God grants you a victory, they run over to you in greed of the war booty and say: “Did we not remain with you?” (4:141)).

The word *وَارْتَبْتُمْ* implies that the Hypocrites remained in a continuous state of doubt and hesitation. They never were convinced of the veracity of Islam and of the Prophet (sws). They had ties – though not deep – with both Islam and disbelief and wanted that they become deep and permanent with the one who finally prevails on the other. It is this mental state of theirs which is referred to in the following words at another place: *مُذَبِّبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ* (4:143) (wavering between both of them and belonging fully neither to these nor to those, (4:143)).

The words *وَعَرَّيْتُمُ الْأَمَانِيَّ حَتَّى جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَعَرَّيْتُمُ بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ* refer to the fact that these Hypocrites remained entangled in false desires. If the Almighty gave them respite, they wrongly thought that their scheme had succeeded, and that this policy of theirs will remain successful to the end; however, this desire could not be fulfilled. Satan kept on deceiving them and the decision of God to prevail the truth on falsehood was pronounced, and they had to face this evil day.

The word *الْعُرُورُ* refers to Satan. To deceive people regarding God means that Satan would be able to convince them that the information that was kept on being given to them regarding their fate was mere deception which neither materialized earlier nor would do so in future and that they need not be worried. The information referred to here being that people who strongly adhere to disbelief or find refuge in hypocrisy even after the Prophet of God conclusively delivered the truth to them will definitely be seized by Him.

قَالِيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ
وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ¹⁶

The implication is that this situation that they encountered only came after they were fully informed of it and after the truth had been conclusively communicated to them. Thus they now have no way out of it. On this day, neither does a person have anything to give in ransom nor will ransom be accepted from anyone. It will not be accepted from these Hypocrites nor from the disbelievers with whom they have close ties of friendship. Since they never fully entered the folds of Islam hence in

16. So, today no ransom shall be accepted from you, or from the disbelievers. The Fire shall be the abode for all of you; it is your place of return and what an evil abode it is!”

spite of laying claims to it, they will end with the same fate as the disbelievers. Both of them will reside in Hell and this shall be their place of return. In other words, there is no room left for them to beseech and implore before God; no one will hear their pleading. Hell is their abode. Whatever they will have, it will be from Hell and they should remember that it is a very evil abode.

Section III: Verses (16-24)

The succeeding verses are directed at the Hypocrites who are addressed in the previous section. Initially, they are warned of their evil fate: if even after seeing such clear signs to corroborate the Prophethood of the prophet, their indecisiveness does not go away, then their hearts will be hardened the way the hearts of the Jews were. It was because of this hard-heartedness of the Jews that the Almighty sealed their hearts.

After that they are encouraged. The purpose is to tell them that they should not get intimidated by the current circumstances and should have faith in the power and mercy of the Almighty. How can it be impossible for the God Who is able to enliven a dead piece of land to give such impetus to the call of the true faith that disbelief vanishes from the land. In this regard, they are also assured that those who spend for the cause of God will never end up in loss. They will receive seventy times reward for such spending, and this is the way for them to enter into the ranks of *ṣiddīq* and the *shuhadā'*.

Next, the transient and ephemeral nature of those things of this world is portrayed which has lured people to such an extent that they have forgotten the eternal kingdom which is as vast as the heavens and the earth which they can easily buy from the pebbles they have collected.

At the end, guidance is given on the all important principle that sorrow and joy, poverty and affluence, ease and difficulty of this world are not dependent on one's schemes. They are dependent on the destiny carved out by God. For this reason, neither is it befitting for a person to become haughty and proud if he becomes affluent nor is it appropriate for him to lose hope and complain on the trials and tests that come his way. On the contrary, he should express gratitude on being blessed with favours and show patience on the trials that he is put through, and in both cases focus his heart's attention to God.

Readers may now proceed to read the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ
 أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (١٦)
 اَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٧) إِنَّ
 الْمُصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٨)
 وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ وَالشَّهَدَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١٩) اَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا
 لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ
 الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ
 مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (٢٠) سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ
 وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
 يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢١) مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي
 أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٢٢) لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا
 فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (٢٣) الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ
 وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٤)

Is it not time for those who have professed faith that their hearts submit to God's reminder and to the truth which has been revealed, and to be not like those who were given the Book before this, so a long period passed on them. At last, their hearts were hardened and many of them are disobedient. (16)

Keep in mind that God restores the earth to life after its death. We have made plain Our revelations to you that you may understand. (17)

Indeed men or women who spend for the cause of God and those who give a generous loan to God shall be repaid manifold. And for them is a noble recompense. And those who professed faith in God and His messengers will be among the *siddiq* and the *shuhadā'*. For them, shall also be their reward and also their light. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will be the companions of Hell. (18-19)

Know that the parable of the life of this world – a sport and an entertainment, an embellishment and a show among you, a quest for greater riches and more children – is that of rain whose luxuriant produce lures the hearts of the disbelievers; but then it withers and you see it turn

yellow, then turns into bits and pieces. And in the life to come a grievous penalty also and the forgiveness of God and His pleasure also. And the life of this world is but a provision of deception. (20)

Strive to outdo others for the pardon of your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on whom He will and great is God's grace. (21)

And every misfortune that befalls you whether in the produce of the earth or in your own persons is written in a book before We bring it into being, and this is very easy for God. You are being told this so that you may not grieve for things you lose or be overjoyed at what He blesses you with. And remember that God does not love the haughty and the proud who are stingy themselves and urge others to stinginess. And those who show indifference should remember that God is self-sufficient and possesses all worthy attributes. (22-24)

Explanation

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (١٦)¹⁷

The words الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا, as alluded to earlier, refer to the Hypocrites whose behaviour is under discussion here. Since they claimed to be believers, they are mentioned here as believers so that they seriously reflect on the demands of faith which as a result are imposed on them. Moreover, if they think that this claim has some worth, they should try to fulfill the obligations it imposes on them.

It is evident from the words أَلَمْ يَأْنِ that this *sūrah* was revealed at the time when the signs of veracity of the call to the true faith and of its dominance had become so evident that those who had any doubts in their minds should have been able to dispel them. Even if after seeing so many signs, their doubts continued to exist, then this only meant that they were not ready to accept Islam from the core of their hearts unless they saw each and every claim it made should come true before their very eyes. Such a faith has no value before God. For this reason, people are threatened that if they still remain entangled in doubts, their fate will be no different than that of the Jews. They too continued to harbor doubts in them, and a lot of time elapsed in this state; as a result, their hearts

17. Is it not time for those who have professed faith that their hearts submit to God's reminder and to the truth which has been revealed, and to be not like those who were given the Book before this, so a long period passed on them. At last, their hearts were hardened and many of them are disobedient.

hardened. Matters reached the extent that no room remained for the truth to be nurtured in their hearts, and the Almighty sealed their hearts, as has been adumbrated in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Baqarah.

It is evident from this discussion that there is nothing wrong about doubts arising on some matter relating to the truth; neither is their existence for some time any matter of rebuke. A sincere person can also face this situation; however, if a person by seeking refuge in these doubts keeps lulling the calls of the truth which arise in him to sleep and makes them an excuse to adhere to falsehood, then as per the established practice of the Almighty, he is deprived of the very ability to accept the truth. The Almighty does not bear for long a person not giving due importance to the truth.

In the expression *ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ* the words *ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ* and *الْحَقِّ* imply the Qur'ān, however, these two terms have been used to direct attention to two distinct aspects of the Qur'ān. *ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ* refers to the warnings which have been revealed to inform them of the dangers and pitfalls these people who are trying to find excuses to evade the truth will necessarily have to face in this world and the next, and *الْحَقِّ* refers to the principles once again highlighted by the Qur'ān in distinction from falsehood. The verse says that so many signs and indications now exist together to substantiate these principles that hearts of the people should have surrendered before them. If this still does not happen, then this only means that these people are inflicted with the same ailment as the Jews were.

It has been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs* that the Jews were afflicted so much with the malady of harbouring doubts in themselves that in the presence of their prophet while observing his miracles and the signs of God at every step they still remained in a state of incredulity. So much so, this malady of theirs deprived them of the Torah, and as a result of this very attitude the majority of them were deprived of the Qur'ān as well. Here the Hypocrites are warned of this wrong attitude and its fate: they too like the Jews are inflicted with the malady of doubt and skepticism; this could very well lead them to doom the way it led the Jews to their doom.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٧)¹⁸

This verse has come at a very appropriate place, and it refers to two aspects of the remedy of incredulity with which the Hypocrites were

18. Keep in mind that God restores the earth to life after its death. We have made plain Our revelations to you that you may understand.

inflicted.

The most evident aspect is that if a person does not believe in the Hereafter, then sacrificing life and wealth for him is indeed a very difficult proposition. The real ailment which these Hypocrites were afflicted with was that they did not have belief in the Hereafter; for this reason, they were regarding the promises of the Qur'ān to be mere deception. In order to remove this state of uncertainty and doubt of theirs, the Almighty directed their attention to the signs and testimonies which He has mentioned in the Qur'ān regarding the Hereafter as a known and observable reality. Here since the objective is only to remind people that the Hereafter is certain to come, for this reason after referring to an obvious argument on its possibility it is briefly stated that arguments in favour of the Hereafter have been mentioned in the Qur'ān; they should refresh them in their minds so that they are able to inculcate in them the courage to sacrifice their life and wealth.

The second aspect is that these Hypocrites were very over-awed by the grandeur of the opponents of Islam. They were not able to understand how the highly outnumbered Muslims will be able to fight their huge army and how will it be possible for them to dislodge from Makkah the strongly rooted government of the Quraysh and make it a place of the Abrahamic call as they claimed. Even though in some of the battles fought between the two, Muslims had fared better, the Hypocrites were still afraid in their hearts. They were in a continuous state of hopelessness and uncertainty as far as the future of Islam was concerned. In order to rid them of this state of hopelessness, the Almighty directed their attention to the earth as a sign of God: how can it be beyond the God whose grandeur they keep witnessing when He enlivens a dead piece of land to convert the land of disbelief which was Arabia into a place teeming with belief and faith.

إِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٨)¹⁹

This verse expresses from another aspect what is mentioned in verse eleven: the Hypocrites are urged that spending in the way of God incurs no loss; it is an extremely lucrative deal. Every penny of people lies safe with God who keep spending in the way of God, and when in emergency situations they are appealed for help, they generously do so. He keeps increasing it for them, and will return them in the form of an everlasting treasure. Moreover for them is an honourable reward. In other words

19. Indeed men or women who spend for the cause of God and those who give a generous loan to God shall be repaid manifold. And for them is a noble recompense.

besides being returned manifold of what they spent, they will also receive a great reward as a special blessing of the Almighty.

Here two words have been used for spending in the way of God: *ṣadaqah* (charity) and *qarḍ* (loan). The first is in the form of an adjective (*ism ul fā'il*) and the second in the form of a verb. The reason for this difference is that one type of spending in the way of God is something which is demanded in general circumstances from every Muslim who can spend, and which is an essential ingredient of acquiring purification of the soul. Another type of spending in the way of God is one which is made as a demand from people in emergency situations for the protection and preservation of the Muslims. The first of these is called *ṣadaqah* and for this adjectives and *ism al-fā'ils* are used because it is a permanent requirement. The second of these is called loan and since it is given at the time of need, verbs are used to express it.

Another aspect which needs consideration in these verses is that the Qur'ān has mentioned women alongside men while discussing spending in the way of God to highlight their responsibility as well in this regard. The reason for this is that the wife and the kids are very significant factors which contribute to miserliness and cowardice, and it is these two things which in reality lead a person to hypocrisy. Ahādīth also mention that the wife and kids become a source of miserliness and cowardice. For this very reason, in this verse the women among the Hypocrites are emphatically mentioned alongside the men among the Hypocrites and women who spend in charity are emphatically mentioned alongside men who spend in charity so that besides men, women are also clearly told that God will hold accountable each and every person whether man or woman for his or her responsibilities.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّٰدِقُونَ وَالشَّٰهَدَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
وَنُورُهُمْ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١٩)²⁰

Contextual and concomitant indicators show that just as in verse seven the word faith (*īmān*) is used in its complete sense, similar is the case in this verse.

In this verse, the Hypocrites are being told that the positions of *ṣiddīqīn* and the *shuhadā'* will not be given by God to every person who claims to be a believer. These positions are reserved for only those people who

20. And those who professed faith in God and His messengers will be among the *siddīq* and the *shuhadā'*. For them, shall also be their reward and also their light. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will be the companions of Hell.

will profess true and strong faith in God and His Prophet and testify with their deeds to their claim to faith. Here since spending in the way of God is specially mentioned, it becomes of its own accord that only people who will spend generously for helping the cause of their religion are truthful in their claim to faith, and it is such people who will be fortunate enough to be regarded among the *ṣiddīqīn* and the *shuhadāʾ*.

I have already presented my research on the word *ṣiddīq* at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. Its real essence is complete harmony between one's words and deeds. In Arabic that spear is called صادق الكعوب whose rings prove as secure in practice as they seem. A person who is called *ṣādiq* or *ṣiddīq* is one who is a man of his words. The foremost sign of this is that he is ready to sacrifice what he earned from his hands for the veracious objective he had declared to adopt. Through this sacrifice, he becomes one who bears evidence to this objective, and it is expected from such a truthful person that if he is put through a trial, he will bear witness to the truth even if he has to sacrifice his life for it. The most prominent person in whom this attribute manifested itself in Islamic history is Abū Bakr (rta). The manner in which he is substantiated his claim to faith by spending in the way of God in the most precarious of situations has become the brightest chapter of Muslim history.

The word *shuhadāʾ* is used here in the same meaning as it is used in the verse: وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا (١٤٣:٢) (and similarly, We have made you a balanced community so that you be witnesses to the religion of God before the people, and the *rasūl* be such a witness before you, (2:143)).

The implication is that the great status of *shuhadāʾ* 'ala ala-nāṣ (witness of the religion of God before people) which has been conferred on this *ummah* cannot be given to someone who merely lays claim to faith; it will only be attained by those whose each and every limb bears witness to faith. Here it needs to be kept in consideration that people who die for the cause of God are called *shahīd* because they fulfill the responsibility of bearing witness to the religion of God before people through laying down their lives for it. Since this martyrdom is the greatest witness to the religion of God, hence such a person is called *shahīd*.

This same aspect is highlighted in Sūrah Nisa# by addressing the Hypocrites thus:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّدِيقِينَ
وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ (٤: ٦٩)

And those who sincerely obey Allah and the Prophet shall be among

those whom God has blessed like the Prophets, the *ṣiddīqīn*, the *shuhadā'* and the righteous. (4:69)

The words لَّهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ imply that the light and reward which is mentioned earlier in verses eleven and twelve is for such people who are ready to lay down their lives for this purpose.

The words وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ imply that all those who perpetrated the crime of denying the truth and remaining in disbelief will go to Hell. The occasion and context shows that this fate shall also befall people who though did not deny from their tongues did not testify by their deeds; in fact, their deeds were in complete contradiction to the claims they made.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ
كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (٢٠)²¹

This verse reminds and warns the Hypocrites who had become slaves to their riches that the life of this world is a sport and a diversion, the fervency will to embellish one self, the quest for greater riches and more children and the competition of increasing one's standard of life will not lead them to a favourable fate. Its example is exactly similar to abundant rain which refreshes the cultivated land and the ingrates swell with joy on seeing it but later some calamity visits it and it becomes yellow after being withered away and then is crushed to bits and pieces; this same fate will fall all the efforts of such people which they are expending in gaining the pleasures of this world and in outdoing one another in this competition; none of these things will remain.

The implication of the words وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ is that because of their foolishness they are regarding the attainment of the pleasures of life to be the goal and objective of all their efforts, whereas this world is only a place of deception; the real goal is the Hereafter, and there they will have to face

21. Know that the parable of the life of this world – a sport and an entertainment, an embellishment and a show among you, a quest for greater riches and more children – is that of rain whose luxuriant produce lures the hearts of the disbelievers; but then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then turns into bits and pieces. And in the life to come a grievous penalty also and the forgiveness of God and His pleasure also. And the life of this world is but a provision of deception.

either of the two things: a severe torment and acceptance of forgiveness from God. If a person is not able to win the pleasure and forgiveness of God by sacrificing the avarices of this life, he will necessarily face His severe torment.

In the opinion of our exegetes, the parsing of the verse is that the words *أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا* form the inchoative (*mubtada'*) and the rest of the verse forms the enunciative (*khabar*). However, in my opinion, the words *لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ* which occur after are a permutative (*badal bayan*) and the words *... كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ* are the enunciative of this inchoative. Examples of this style abound in the Qur'ān. For example: (٩٦: ١٥-١٦) *نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ لَنَسْفَعَنَّا رَبَّنَا أَلِثَابَ الْغُلَاقِ أَغْرَاقَهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ الْمَخَالِغِ* (We shall drag him by the forelock, a lying, sinful forelock, (96:15-16)). Thus in the opinion of our exegetes the meaning of this verse is that the life of this world is only sport, embellishment and outdoing each other in the acquisition of wealth and status. In my opinion, the verse means that the parable of the life of this world ie sport, embellishment and outdoing each other in the acquisition of wealth and status is such that ...

As per the analysis of the exegetes of this verse, the life of this world in its collective form is something to be hated and condemned and this actually supports the monastic life which the Qur'ān has severely condemned later in this very *surah*. If my analysis is accepted, then it is not this world collectively which has been regarded as condemnable; only that aspect of this world will be regarded as hateful with which the disbelievers and the hypocrites are infatuated and which is instrumental in taking them to Hell.

A deliberation on this verse with regard to the philosophy of religion shows that this worldly life itself is not something condemnable; it is a person's attitude which makes it condemnable or merciful. If a person leads his life within the limits prescribed by God, then this short span of worldly life can become a guarantee for the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, and if he leads his life in violation of these limits and regards himself to be god and is lost in the pleasures of this life, then it will become eternal condemnation for him. This verse in fact warns us of this aspect of life.

The word *كُفَّارٌ* (*kuffār*: disbeliever) used in the verse also needs to be deliberated upon. Exegetes generally regard it to refer to farmers (*zurrah*); however, I am not convinced of this interpretation. The reason for this is that this word is not customarily used for this purpose. What at most can be said is that the root from which this word is made has the possibility of this meaning. However, merely this thing is not enough to regard this word to have such a rare meaning specially when it is used

abundantly as a term with a specific connotation in the Qur'ān. Also, there is no other example of this rare usage in the Qur'ān. In the following verse of Sūrah Fath, both words are used in their specific meanings: (٢٩:٤٨) فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سَوَاقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزَّرَّاعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ (so that the cultivated land arose firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that hearts of the disbelievers get agonized, (48:29). This shows that they are distinctly known to have their specific meanings. For this reason, it seems to me that the word *kuffār* is used in its actual meaning. Since in this parable the objective is to highlight the attitude of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter, the verse says that the transient glamour of this world attract the hearts of these people; they get very engrossed in it and ultimately face the torment which such unfortunate people are destined to face. It needs to be kept in mind that at times certain words are inserted in similes and parables which are meant to point to point to people who are in consideration in them. I have alluded to some of these things. It is important to keep them in consideration otherwise the real beauty of a simile or parable does not become evident. Here by using this word, those people are indicated towards whom the simile is directed.

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢١)²²

In the previous verse, it was said that all the efforts and mutual competition of the disbelievers to outdo one another in acquiring the riches of life and in being superior to one another is related to the temporary and transient pleasure of this world. They do not have the courage to go beyond this; however, the objective of the believers should be the forgiveness of God and to please Him, and instead of going after the narrow path of this world they should try to outdo one another in taking a place in Paradise – the Paradise whose vastness is equal to that of the heavens and the earth, and which has been prepared by God for sincere believers who have true and strong faith in God and His Prophets.

It is evident from the way the word *عَرْضُ* is used here that it refers to “the length and breadth” that is vastness and enormity, and the word *سَّمَاء* refers to the genre or in other words all the skies. Thus this word is used in its plural form in the following verse: وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا (١٣٣:٣) (vie with each other to earn the forgiveness of your

22. Strive to outdo others for the pardon of your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on whom He will and great is God's grace.

Lord and a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth, (3:133)).

The implication of the words *لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ* is that Paradise should not be considered as something far-off; it has been prepared for those who profess faith in God and His Messengers. As soon as the trial of this world ends, the Paradise of each person will be unveiled before him. One must not express wonder that in reward for the virtue done for a few days God will bless each person with such a vast Paradise. God is very gracious. He can bestow His grace on whomsoever He wills. There is no shortage of things with Him.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ
ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٢٢)²³

The message of the verse is that it should be kept in consideration that whatever trials a person will face related to his life and wealth shall necessarily come to him; however much a person tries to save himself from them he will not be able to run away from them. The Almighty has written every good or bad thing that will befall in a book, and no one can change what has been ordained for him. God's knowledge embraces the present and the future and thus bringing about this is not of the slightest bother for Him. People on the basis of their limited knowledge regard it to be beyond the realm of possibility; however, God has created everything. It is a very ordinary matter for Him to write the fate of a creation even before creating it.

It was essential to explain this point here while inviting people to spend for the cause of the Almighty because only those people desist from expending their lives and wealth for the cause of God who wrongly think that whatever wealth they acquire is the result of their own planning, and they themselves can guard the life they have been blessed with. It is to remove this misunderstanding of people that it is said that wealth is a blessing of God, and for this reason it is extreme foolishness to protect it for Him. How can someone save something from someone who has in fact bestowed it upon him? If a person shows stinginess in this regard, then the Almighty might snatch it away from him by sending some calamity. The right attitude for a person in this regard is that he should carry out his obligation and should hope to God that just as He has helped him today, He will rid him of all his difficulties tomorrow as well. At other places in the Qur'ān, a trait of the character of the Hypocrites and the misers has

23. And every misfortune that befalls you whether in the produce of the earth or in your own persons is written in a book before We bring it into being, and this is very easy for God.

been mentioned: they would desist from spending for the cause of God because of the fear of some future monetary need that may arise. In other words, they justified their miserliness to be a remedy for future hardships and calamities; the fact of the matter is that what is going to happen is bound to happen. Its remedy is not to show stinginess before God; the cure lies in spending for His cause and trusting Him.

The words *فِي الْأَرْضِ* refer to financial calamities with which land produce could be affected and the words *فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ* refer to those calamities which a person and his body is afflicted with. The trials which a person faces in this world are generally of these two categories. The verse clarifies that both these types are already destined by God. Thus it is not proper for a person to evade spending for God nor is it proper to try to evade expending his life for the cause of God. He does not have the power to shield these two things from God. At another place in the Qur'ān, these Hypocrites are addressed and told that today they are desisting from treading the path of God and fear death; the fact of the matter is that the time of death destined for them is bound to come and even if they hide in strong castles death will find them.

The word *فِي كِتَابٍ* refers to the fate which God has written for each person. It is also called the guarded tablet and in fact means the knowledge of God.

The words *إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ* imply that man's knowledge is very limited; for this reason, it is very difficult for him to imagine how is it possible to write down before hand every thing which is going to befall each and every person. However, this is no difficult a task at all for God. He is the Creator of this whole universe and His knowledge embraces everything. He knows every phase a person will pass through and the destination he will ultimately reach.

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ الَّذِينَ
يَخْلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ²⁴ (٢٤-٢٣)

Here a part of the discourse is suppressed before *لِكَيْ*. If this is unveiled, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: on this occasion, you are being reminded of this reality so that you do not express sorrow on something which you lose and neither should you express pride on

24. You are being told this so that you may not grieve for things you lose or be overjoyed at what He blesses you with. And remember that God does not love the haughty and the proud who are stingy themselves and enjoin others to be stinginess. And those who show indifference should remember that God is self-sufficient and possesses all worthy attributes.

something you receive; on the contrary, on the basis of this belief, your behaviour should be such that when you are afflicted with some financial or bodily calamity, you show be patient because this was what was ordained before hand for you, and there must be some wisdom of God concealed in this; on other hand, if you are blessed with a favour, you should be thankful to God because He had bestowed it on you; you should not vainly and conceitedly reckon that it is the result of your own planning and capability.

The words *وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ* imply that those who become arrogant and proud after receiving the favours of God should remember that God does not like people who are arrogant and proud. The words “not like” though are apparently soft yet they are very severe as per their meaning. I have explained elsewhere that at times what said in such a negative statement when expressed as a positive statement would be something like this: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْغُضُ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ* (Indeed, God hates the proud and the haughty). In reality, the speaker does not want to say this in explicit words and wants his anger to be understood implicitly through the style and nuance of his words.

The words *الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ* indicate the other aspect of this character of theirs: since such people in their silliness think that what they have is because of their own planning so they think that except for spending on their own show and pomp and on outdoing others in acquiring wealth, spending for the cause of God and for the people is a penalty and loss to them. In such cases, they show miserliness and advise others to be misers as well so that they are able to conceal their own miserliness. At some places in the Qur’ān, this aspect of the character of the misers is highlighted: their desire and efforts always revolve around seeing others remain misers like themselves so that no one is able to detect their miserliness.

The word *أَمَرَ* here means “to give advice”, a common usage of the word. In other words, when they see others spending for religious and national causes, as their well-wishers, they advise them not to be so generous and that if they are faced with some financial constraints in future they will regret this spending for at that time there will be no one to bail them out.

The words *وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ* express disgust and indifference in a very threatening manner to such misers: if even after this reminder and exhortation, these people continue to desist, then they should remember that God is indifferent to them. If He is calling them to spend for His cause, then this is not because there is some deficiency in His treasures; on the contrary, it is because He has given the chance to

His people to earn eternal reward, as has been indicated in verse eighteen earlier.

The attribute *ḥamīd* is mentioned with the attribute *ghanī* to show that God is absolutely self-sufficient and indifferent as far as His person is concerned. He needs no one. If He asks from people, then this is not because He is in need of them; it is because He is *ḥamīd*; He wants people to become worthy of His blessings and convert the pebbles they give to Him into pearls and return these to them.

Section IV: Verses (25-29)

Coming up are the last verses of the *sūrah* in which an objection raised by the People of the Book specially the Christians is answered forthwith. The spending for the cause of God to which the believers were urged related to *jihād*, as is evident from the context. As long as the Muslims remained oppressed and prevailed upon in Makkah, the Quraysh and the People of the Book used their helplessness and weakness as an argument of they being not worthy of being followed. However, when in Madīnah, Muslims were able to organize themselves as a collectivity and, in spite of their small number, were even able to convincingly defeat the Quraysh in certain battles, the Quraysh and the People of the Book started to spread propaganda against their spirit of *jihād*. They would say that how can these people be regarded as a religious group when the greatest virtue to them is to shed blood and wage war; what relation do God's Prophets and His pious people have with bloodshed and war? They call people to peace, security, truce and love. In those times, the monastic concept of religion was very dominant in the minds of the people; for this reason the Quraysh took cue from this objection raised by the People of the Book. Thus at the time of the battle of Badr, they taunted the Prophet (sws) that how can he be God's Messenger when he is responsible for a brother killing his own brother. The Qur'ān has answered this criticism at various places. Some of its important aspects have been discussed in Sūrah Anfāl and Sūrah Ḥajj. Here, three points have been made in the light of the history of the prophets and messengers of God.

Firstly, all messengers and prophets are sent by God to guide people to the path of truth and justice. For this purpose, the Almighty revealed His Book so that it may serve as scale and a barometer for them and by using this scale, they are able to inform people what is true and what is false, what is just and what is unjust.

Secondly, a corollary of the imposition of justice and fairness is that oppression and injustice be put an end to. This entailed that with such

Books, power should also be bestowed so that forces who oppose justice can be vanquished. For this purpose, God together with His Books also sent down iron. Among the multifarious benefits of iron for people is that it provides them with the power which is necessary to wage war for the creation of the system of truth and justice. *Jihād* is a trial of God for people: He tests the sincere and the hypocrites through it and sees who among them can lay down their lives for the cause of the truth and who make a pretentious display of being Muslims.

Thirdly, all the prophets and messengers of God from among the progeny of Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws) came for this true purpose and for establishing this system of justice, and for this cause too, the Almighty sent Jesus, son of Mary (sws). The Almighty specially put mercy and compassion in their hearts taking advantage of which the later generations invented monasticism. It was an innovation on their part and had no basis in religion. All that was made obligatory on them was to please God which is a common teaching of all the prophets. However, because of their religious extremism, they did not observe its limits, and distorted the face of religion by inventing monasticism. Now, by finding arguments from this distorted religion they are raising objections on the directive of *jihād* given by Islam.

Since the Christians were the most effected by this *fitnah* of monasticism and had gone astray as a result, at the end of the *surah* they are specially called towards Islam so that they who claim to profess faith in Jesus (sws) are not deprived of the great favour of Islam by getting entangled in innovations like monasticism. If they profess faith in the last Messenger of God too, the Almighty as per His promise will twice reward them, and these Jews who think that they have a monopoly on God's blessings and favours will keep burning in the fire of hatred in which they are now burning.

Readers may now proceed to read the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ
وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢٥) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ
فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٦) ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ
مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا

كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٧) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢٨) لَيْلًا يَعْلَمُ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَلَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)

Indeed We have sent messengers with clear signs, and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, and also sent down iron which has great power and other benefits for mankind. And through this, God also wanted to differentiate people who help Him and His messengers while being unseen. Indeed God is Powerful and Mighty. (25)

And We sent forth Noah and Abraham as messengers and initiated in their progenies prophethood and the Book. Thus some of them were rightly guided, but most of them turned out to be disobedient. Then in their footsteps, We sent other messengers and also similarly sent Jesus son of Mary and gave Him the Gospel, and put compassion and mercy in the hearts of his followers. And as far monasticism, they invented it themselves. We had only enjoined on them to seek to please God; but they did not faithfully observe its bounds. So those among them who strongly adhered to faith, We gave them their reward and most of them turned out to be disobedient. Believers! Have fear of God and profess faith in His Messenger. He will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk and will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful. So that the People of the Book do not know that they do not have any control on anything from among the grace of God and that grace is in God's Hands alone. He bestows it upon whom He wills and abounding is God's grace. (26-29)

Explanation

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢٥)²⁵

25. Indeed We have sent messengers with clear signs, and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, and also sent down iron which has great power and other benefits for mankind. And through this, God

Mentioned in this verse is the purpose of sending forth messengers and revelation of divine books: so that people in every walk of life are able to adhere to justice and truth; they are able to adopt the right path in matters of beliefs – the path which is straight, free from deviancies and is the middle one; similarly, in matters of deeds, – whether they relate to the individual life or to the collective life – they are able to stick to the right path which is free of any trace of oppression and injustice. It is evident from this that the Almighty did not send His messengers to advise people nor revealed His Books that they may be merely recited; the purpose was that people in their guidance were able to adhere to and implement justice and truth.

The word مِيزَان (*mīzān*) is mentioned with كِتَاب (*kitāb*) to explain the greatest purpose of divine books: they weigh everything and tell us how much of truth a thing has and how much has been wrongly added to it. Sūrah Shūrā has dwelt at length on this aspect of divine books.²⁶ There, first it has been elucidated that all the Prophets of God instructed people only regarding monotheism, and stopped people from even slightly deviating from it. After that, the Prophet (sws) was directed to call people towards it only and to inform all his adversaries that he had professed faith in the Book revealed by God so how can he follow their innovations; by bestowing this Book on him, the Almighty has set him at the position of a judge and weigh the amount of truth each person has in this scale, and thus also make evident the extent of falsehood each person has. This discussion ends on the following verse:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ (١٧:٤٢)

It is God who has revealed with truth the Book and which is the scale for judgement; and what do you know that the hour of Day of Reckoning is near [to pronounce judgement]. (42:17)

It is evident from this aspect that the Qur'ān has also been called *muhaymin* which means a scale. By weighing in this scale the truth can be distinguished from falsehood. In order to maintain justice and fairness, both the *mīzān* and the scale are required. For this reason, the Almighty has delineated these two features of the Qur'ān.

The implication of the words وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ is that when the real objective behind sending the messengers and revealing the *sharī'ah* is to establish the system of justice, then this objective

also wanted to differentiate people who help Him and His messengers while being unseen. Indeed God is Powerful and Mighty.

26. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 6, 152-157.

cannot merely be achieved by counselling and urging, giving glad tidings or warning people; power is essential for it. For this reason, on the one hand, the Almighty sent His messengers with manifest arguments and Books as calibrated scales so that people are conclusively communicated this truth regarding intellectual and moral issues, and, on the other hand, He also sent down iron so that people who are not ready to submit to the truth after this conclusive communication of the truth and are bent upon spreading anarchy in the society for their vested interests are overpowered. Thus, it has remained the established practice of the Almighty that when He sent any of His messengers to a people, then after conclusive communication of the truth by a messenger one of the following two situations arose. If those who professed faith in the messenger were small in number and the majority among them were those who adhered to disbelief, then the Almighty destroyed the disbelievers by sending some earthly and heavenly calamity after sifting out the believers from them. On the other hand, if the number of people who professed faith in the messenger were sizeable in number, then the messenger and his companions were directed to wage war against the disbelievers as a result of which the disbelievers were ultimately routed. The history of the messengers of God mentioned in the Qur'ān bears witness to this established practice of the Almighty.

Though iron comes out of the earth, the word أَنْزَلْنَا (We sent down) is used by the Qur'ān. This is very similar to the usage of this word by the Qur'ān for the creation of cattle. The purpose is, on the one hand, to direct attention to the special benefit which is found in it for man, and, on the other hand, this word tells us of the real source and fountainhead of everything: a thing can be obtained from anywhere, but the fact of the matter is that it is from God. Until and unless, a person has this fact fully grounded in his mind, he can never fully assess the value of God's favours.

An important thing to note in this section of the verse is that the word مَنَافِعُ is mentioned prior to بَاسٍ. It is evident from this that the real significance of iron in the eyes of the Almighty is to provide power and strength for *jihād*. Its benefits which relate to construction and to other spheres of society are secondary and supplementary.

This aspect should also be kept in consideration that here the Qur'ān has mentioned iron as the real and foremost means of war. At that time, most weapons of war would be made by iron. Today, its position has become secondary and some other elements have become more important. In the changed circumstances, these new elements have now assumed the status of iron.

The words وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ explain the wisdom of *jihād*: though God Himself is powerful and mighty and can rout the greatest of His enemies in the blink of any eye, He actually tests His people through *jihād* that who among them while not being able to see God still helps Him and His messengers and who among them are mere zealous pretenders who fail this test. The verb يَعْلَمُ, as explained earlier in this *tafsīr* also means to distinguish and to make distinct. God knows everything but through such trials He distinguishes the righteous from the wrongdoers.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٦)²⁷

This is a reference to the history that all prophets and messengers sent by God were sent for the purpose that they call people to impose justice and fairness in the society; however, very few from their progeny adhered to achieving this purpose; the majority deviated from this purpose because of their proclivity to religious innovations and ended up being disobedient.

Only two messengers are mentioned here by name: Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws). The reason for this is obvious that Noah (sws) occupies the status of being Adam the second, and Abraham (sws) is the forefather to all the prophets of the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. It is as if by mentioning these two all the rest have been mentioned. This verse is actually a prelude to the subject raised in the succeeding verse.

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٧)²⁸

This verse says that when all the prophets adhered to the same

27. And We sent forth Noah and Abraham as messengers and initiated in their progenies prophethood and the Book. Thus some of them were rightly guided, but most of them turned out to be disobedient.

28. Then in their footsteps, We sent other messengers and also similarly sent Jesus son of Mary and gave Him the Gospel, and put compassion and mercy in the hearts of his followers. And as far monasticism, they invented it themselves. We had only enjoined on them to seek to please God; but they did not faithfully observe its bounds. So those among them who strongly adhered to faith, We gave them their reward and most of them turned out to be disobedient.

methodology outlined above, then from where did the innovation of monasticism (*raḥbāniyyah*) and the deviance of regarding *jihād* to be against religiosity arise? All the messengers sent after Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws) by the Almighty followed in their footsteps: all called their people to adhere to justice, and if the need arose they, in accordance with the practice of prophets, even waged *jihād*. None of the messengers adopted a different way to this. To achieve this very purpose, Jesus (sws), son of Mary (sws), was also sent and he was given the Gospel. He had not been sent to teach monasticism (*raḥbāniyyah*) to his people. The only thing was that the Almighty specially made their hearts very merciful and compassionate. By taking advantage of this, the later innovators invented the whole system of monasticism even though monasticism was never made mandatory on them; seeking God's pleasure was what was made mandatory on them. However, they did not observe its bounds and broke the limits of the *sharī'ah* and human nature and went astray.

It is evident from this verse that the innovation of monasticism entered religion through the Christians; however, the teachings of Jesus (sws) or the Gospel or his real successors had no role in this induction: all of it was an invention of later generations.

The words *وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً* praises the foremost followers of Jesus (sws): God placed compassion and mercy in their hearts. The purpose of this praise is that these very attributes of theirs became a reason for the later ones in favour of monasticism. The fact of the matter is that just as Jesus (sws) taught his followers to be merciful and compassionate, every other prophet of God directed their followers to be so. The words used by the Qur'ān regarding Muḥammad (sws) are: *حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ* (9:128). About Muslims themselves, the words used are: *رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ* (they are merciful to one another, 48:29). In Ḥadīth narratives, the attributes of Muslims mentioned are even more clear. It is reported in them that in mutual sympathy and compassion believers are like limbs of a body. The Persian poet Sheikh Sa'dī has translated such a narrative thus:

چو عضوے بدرد آورد روزگار
دگر عضوها را نماند قرار

(If circumstances inflict the limb of a body with pain, the rest of the limbs too get effected.)

Mercy and compassion are not against justice and fairness.

Consequently, the Almighty has regarded the Day of Judgement – a Day when His justice will completely manifest itself – to be a essential corollary of His attribute of mercy: كَتَبَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْمَعَ كُفُّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (١٢:٦) (God has decreed mercy for Himself, and will necessarily gather you all on the Day of Judgement, (6:12). Since the followers of Jesus (sws) did not get the chance to wage *jihād* in his lifetime, hence the later generations used this lack of warfare as an argument in favour of monasticism. The fact of the matter is that had he too gotten the chance of waging *jihād* the way *ummah* of the Prophet (sws) Muḥammad was blessed with this opportunity, he too would have been *ashidā ‘alā al-kuffār* (أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ).²⁹

The words وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا imply that God did place mercy and compassion in their hearts; however, taking advantage of this, the monasticism invented by later generations has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus (sws). The word رَهْبَانِيَّةً (monasticism) is declined in the accusative not by the verb جَعَلْنَا. It is because of an understood verb which is indicated by the later verb ابْتَدَعُوهَا. However, the way monasticism has been mentioned here shows that it was invented because of a good motive; but it was a transgression of the limits set by God. Those who adopted it, in spite of the good behind it, went astray because of their proclivity to religious innovations, extremism and fanaticism.

The words مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ say that the monasticism they had imposed upon themselves was never made mandatory on them by God; it was their own invention. The Almighty had only made it obligatory on them to try to seek His pleasure. Had this monasticism been confined to this only, it would been a boon and blessing for them in this world and in the Hereafter; however, they did not observe its bounds.

The antecedent of the feminine pronoun in رِعَايَتِهَا فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ is obviously رَهْبَانِيَّةً evident from which is that the real fault of the Christians regarding monasticism is they did not observe its limits the way they should have. As a result, many concepts infiltrated into it which were against human nature and intellect. Had they observed these limits, it would not have exceeded beyond what was required of them in seeking the pleasure of God. Seeking the pleasure of God is a teaching common to all divine scriptures, and waging war and *jihād* for the cause of God is the greatest part of this monasticism. In Sūrah Tawbah, this reality has been explained thus:

29. I have explained the established practice of the Almighty regarding *jihād* at many places in this *tafsīr*.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقٌّ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ (١١١:٩)

God has purchased from the believers their lives and wealth in return for Paradise. They fight for the cause of God: thus they slay and are slain. This is a promise due on God in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'ān. (9:111)

It is evident from this verse that waging *jihād* to please God is a common teaching of all the prophets and messengers of God. It is this very teaching which was given to the Christians in the Gospel because it is repeatedly told in the Gospel that the Torah must be fully followed in cases of divine law. On the contrary, they invented a monasticism which lost upon them this very purpose.

Here, it would be worthwhile to refresh a fact to which I have alluded in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Tawbah while explaining the word *sā'ihūn*.³⁰ There I have explained that in Islam we find both positive and negative things about *rāḥbāniyyah* and *siyāḥat* which show that they are not evil in themselves. Evil actually arises in them by not observing their limits as the Qur'ānic words allude to: فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا. Thus Islam has included all those ingredients of *rāḥbāniyyah* and *siyāḥat* which are in accordance with human nature and are in harmony with the objective of pleasing God; it has excluded all those of their components which the innovators had invented and which were in conflict with human nature, and sense and reason. If one reflects on the rituals of worship in Islam, one will find that each of them has the worthy components of *rāḥbāniyyah*. So much so, some narratives regard *jihād* to be *rāḥbāniyyah*.

It is evident from intrinsic contextual and concomitant indicators that the word فَاتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ in its complete and ultimate meaning ie those among the followers of Jesus (sws) who fully adhered to and persevered on his teachings were duly rewarded by God; however, the majority of them turned out to be disobedient and were duly punished for this attitude.

Here, obviously the words الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا refer to Simon, the righteous and true successor of Jesus (sws) and the Christians who followed in his footsteps and who in spite of all types of circumstances adhered to the true religion. Ultimately, it was the later followers of these people who graciously welcomed Islam when its call was given by the Prophet (sws). The Qur'ān at many places has praised them in a very commendable way.

30. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 246-247.

The words **وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ** refer to Paul and his followers who by inventing the innovations of trinity and monasticism distorted the teachings of Jesus (sws) and incorporated in them the deviant and erroneous views of the Romans. Later, it was this “led-astray and leading-others-astray” group which ended up in majority and the adherents to true Christianity ended up in minority.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ³¹ (٢٨)

Here the word **الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** addresses those very Christians who were mentioned earlier by the words **فَأَتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ**. When the discourse reached their mention, then with their reference those Christians were invited to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) who had within them the radiance of faith. They were addressed and told: “O those who have professed faith in Jesus! fear God and profess faith in His Messenger (Muḥammad (sws)) so that God will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk in the Hereafter and He will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful.”

In Sūrah Ma'idah, a group of Christians have been praised thus:

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَسَّيْسِينَ وَرُهَبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٥: ٨٢-٨٣)

You will find the Jews and the Idolaters to be the staunchest in animosity to believers and will find those say: “we are Christians,” to be nearest in affection to them. That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not inflicted with conceit. When they listen to that which was revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes filled with tears because they recognize its truth. They call out: “Lord! We have professed faith. Count us among the witnesses to the last messenger.” (5:82-83)

In the verse under discussion, all the Christians who have any glimmer

31. Believers! Have fear of God and profess faith in His Messenger. He will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk and will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful.

of faith in Jesus (sws) in them are invited to profess faith in Muḥammad (sws): they should fear God and believe in the messenger giving glad tidings of whose advent had been entrusted to them. They have been directed to fear God because many of the Christians did consider Muḥammad (sws) the very unlettered prophet whose predictions were found in the Bible yet they were afraid that the enemies of Islam would become their enemies too. On this, they are told that they should fear God not people; they should full realize what will happen to them if because of fearing people they become indifferent to the fear of God.

The words *كُفِّلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ* re-mention the promise made with the true and righteous People of the Book stated in Sūrah Qaṣaṣ. It was stated there that those among them who fully adhered to their own religion and when in accordance with the predictions mentioned in their scriptures the last messenger of God came to them, they bore witness to his veracity, they shall be rewarded twice. The reason for this is that they had to pass through two trials while bearing witness to the truth. The words are:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (٤٣:٢٨)

To whom we gave the Book before [this Qur'ān] will become among the believers of this [Qur'ān]. And when it is recited to them, they say: "We believe in it; it is the truth from our Lord, and We have continued to acknowledge it long before it came." It is these people who will be rewarded twice because they persevered and responded to the hardships inflicted by people with kind behaviour and spent for the cause of God what We gave them. (28:52-54)

In the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Qaṣaṣ, I had explained that the words *الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ* refer to the true People of the Book, in particular that group of Christians whose love for the truth and fear of God is mentioned in the above quoted verse of Sūrah Mā'idah.

It needs to be understood here that the People of the Book will receive double reward not because of being People of the Book. It would be because they bore witness to the truth revealed to Jesus (sws) and the previous prophets and to the truth revealed to Muḥammad (sws), the unlettered prophet. Since this *ummah* is required to bear witness without any preference or adulteration to all the truth revealed by God whether on the previous prophets or on Muḥammad (sws), it is entitled to receive

twice reward as well. Thus all those who enter this *ummah*, will be blessed with this favour. Ḥadīth narratives have also explained this issue but since there is no difference of opinion in it, I find no need to go into the details.

The words وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ express glad tidings similar to those expressed by verse twelve: يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ (remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands). These same glad tidings are given to these righteous people: they had protected the light of faith given to them by God; they guided themselves through it and also guided others through it; as a reward for this, they will be blessed with a light in the Hereafter which they will carry with them in the darkness of that day and all those will benefit from it as well who had supported them in this world.

لِئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا يَفْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)³²

In this verse, these people are urged to take the lead in becoming the beneficiaries of this blessing of God and to leave aside the jealous Jews. They are told to let them burn in the fire of envy they have ignited in themselves against the unlettered Prophet and those who have professed faith in him. The reason for their jealousy is that they think that only they should be the recipients of God's favours; they do not know that they are not the masters of God's favours; only God Himself is their master; He blesses these favours to whomever He desires. He is very gracious and can bless anyone He wants to.

Though the words أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ (People of the Book) used here are general in their apparent sense and thus can refer to both the Jews and Christians, however concomitant indications show that they refer to the Jews as a collectivity because it was they who had the conceited notion of being the recipients of all the favours and blessings of God. They thought that prophethood could only be given to their race and they alone were the recipients of God's favours and blessings. Because of this very arrogance of theirs, they were very opposed to the claim to prophethood by Muḥammad (sws). When they saw that in spite of their opposition, his call and message were spreading and even many nobles from amongst their own ranks were joining the new faith and becoming its die-hard supporters, the fever of jealousy engulfed them to such an extent that it

32. So that the People of the Book do not know that they do not have any control in anything the grace of God and that grace is in God's Hands alone. He bestows it upon whom He wills and abounding is God's grace.

ultimately destroyed them. The causes of this jealousy and its effects and consequences have already been mentioned with great detail in Sūrah Baqarah.

The words *لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ ...* (till the verse end) express the obvious consequence of this ignorance and foolishness of being continually jealous of the Muslims. They were obviously inflicted with this jealousy because they thought that they alone were the sole race entitled on hereditary basis to all the favours and blessings of God. Had they not been inflicted with this foolishness and had known that prophethood and leadership are God's gifts and He bestows these gifts to whomsoever He desires, there would have been no reason for them to be angry and jealous. They could have understood that God bestowed on them this position for a certain period and now if He is choosing others for it, no one can stop Him, and it is in their well-being to accept this decision of God instead of opposing it and showing jealousy. On the contrary, they continued to remain in the frenzy they had been inflicted with. The essential consequence of this was that the fire of spite and jealousy they were burning in continued to increase. In other words, the real thing which is mentioned here together with inviting people to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) is that they should profess faith in the Prophet (sws) and make themselves entitled to double reward and leave the jealous Jews to themselves to burn in the fire of their jealousy. Instead of saying: "let these Jews burn in the fire of their jealousy and make yourselves entitled to double reward," what is said is: "let the Jews remain in their ignorance that they regard themselves to be the only rightful recipients of God's favours whereas this is mere foolishness on their part, and it is this foolishness which is the cause of their sorrow and jealousy."

The benefit of adopting this style was that the real malady of the Jews also became evident and so did its cause without the discourse becoming harsh.

Our exegetes have faced a lot of confusion in interpreting these last verses of the *sūrah*. If I had cited all these interpretations and then critically analyzed them, it would have taken up a lot of space. This exercise would not have been of any use as well. For this reason, I have presented the true interpretation which is in accordance with the language, context and parallels of the Qur'ān. It is hoped that it will convince people who reflect on it.

Here, two things specially should be kept in consideration regarding language and style:

Firstly, at times the real thing in the discourse is not the apparent discourse itself; it is its consequence. Thus for example the words "so that

the People of the Book do not know that they have any authority on any of God's blessings," what is implied is its consequence: as a necessary result of this ignorance: they die by burning in the jealousy of those blessed.

Secondly, the word *لَا* is not superfluous here. Neither does there exist an example in the Qur'ān where it is superfluous. I have already explained at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr* that it is among those letters about which there is absolutely no possibility to regard them so. Otherwise this will open the doors to deviations created by religious innovators and mischief-mongers. Nevertheless, this letter is at times repeated for the purpose of emphasis, and this repetition is customary as per linguistic usage. There are many examples of this in the Qur'ān and classical Arabic. For example: (١٢:٧) *قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ* (what stopped you from not prostrating, (7:12)) and (٩٥:٢١) *وَحَرَامٌ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ* (it is ordained that no community We intend to destroy will not revert to the truth, (21:95)).

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. *فَاَحْمَدُ لِلّٰهِ* (so gratitude be to God on this).

Rahmānābād,

15th Decemeber, 1977 AD

4th Muḥarram al-ḥrām, 1398 AH